

“The Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.’”

We live in a time when going from one end of the world to the other is normal for many people. Many go abroad for work, & many others travel about to take in the sights — “touring” around to experience other ways of life for pleasure & refreshment.

Need I say we live in a very different time than Abram? He’s given no map, & GPS would have been useless to him. He’s not told where to go. God just makes a promise, & says “Go!”

It’s also worth noting that Abram is not a young man at this point. He’s not some youth looking for a great adventure. By the time this promise unfolds, he and his wife, Sarai, have lived into their seventies — long enough to have settled into patterns. Familiar ways of thinking. Ways of being. They have a history where they live. And they have disappointments. We are told they have no child. And in that world, being childless was not just a private sorrow.

So, there they are: settled, & comfortable as they can be, having put away their yearning for something more. And it’s then that the voice of God speaks: “Go... and I will make of you a great nation... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Notice that, before Abram does anything extraordinary — following, only heaven knows where — before Abram answers God’s call, God makes a promise. That’s where this story begins: not with a command, but with grace.

This is the Second Sunday of Lent. We are only a couple of weeks into the season, and already we may feel its gentle tug — that soft voice calling us to examine our lives. To notice what holds us, & to listen more carefully for the voice of God.

The question of Lent is expressed nicely in the day’s gospel: *what does it mean to be born again?* In Abram’s case, being “born again” doesn’t mean starting over from scratch. It doesn’t mean erasing his past. It just means *receiving his life back as promise*. Long after he came to think he had everything figured out, the excitement of springtime poured down upon him.

“Go... to the land that I will show you.” God’s promise is so much larger than his current horizon. But, notice the future tense. “I will show you.” Clarity comes along the way. And I think that’s generally how new birth works.

We sometimes imagine being born again as a single, dazzling moment, when everything is suddenly clear. But, in Scripture, new birth more often looks like a long walk in an uncertain direction. What makes it different than the old life is *trusting that the One who calls us is faithful*.

Abram goes. As usual, the Old Testament puts it so simply: “So Abram went, as the Lord had told him.” No fanfare. Just a steady step forward — & then another step, & another. And that’s how new birth looks in our lives. Like the quiet courage of going to a new doctor after a frightening diagnosis. Like picking up the phone to mend a strained relationship. Like continuing to show up for worship when grief has reduced you to spiritual poverty. Like retiring from work and wondering who you are now, and trusting that God’s promise is not finished with you yet.

Lent exposes the temptations that tug us in the other direction. The temptation to cling to what is known simply because it is known. The temptation to define ourselves by our losses. The temptation to shrink the scope of God’s promise down to something manageable.

We live in a time of great temptation to drift away from Christ’s body. To think, “I can manage faith on my own.” But Abram is not called into a private spirituality. He is called into a future that will bless “all the families of the earth.” His journey is not for himself alone but also for the sake of innumerable others.

And so it is with us. To be born again is to be drawn more deeply into the life of the Triune God — the Father who speaks promise, the Son who embodies that promise in flesh and blood, & the Spirit who nudges us forward when we would rather stay put. And being drawn into that life means being drawn together.

Every time we come to the Lord's Table and stretch out our hands for bread and wine, we are saying, "We are on the way. We trust the promise."

We may not know where the road will lead. We can count on certain detours. And there is sure to be fear and failure along the way. Just let us remember that the foundation of the journey is not our bravery but God's blessing.

Some of us are standing at thresholds we did not choose. Aging bodies. Changing families. Moving homes. Uncertain futures. Some of us feel as though the moving truck has just pulled up unannounced. And yet the voice that spoke to Abram still speaks: "Go... and I will bless you."

To be born again, in this Lenten season, is to loosen our grip just enough to take the next faithful step. We cannot see the map but we can trust the One who calls us forward. And soon, at the Table, we will be called to remember who we are: people of God's promise. People on the way. People blessed so that we may be a blessing to others.

And so, dear friends in Christ, listen for God, keep your nerves peeled to *feel* where he is nudging you. Toward forgiveness, toward deeper prayer, toward renewed commitment to this community in Christ? Just remember to take heart, knowing that we do not journey alone. The Father calls, the Son walks beside us, & the Spirit provides courage along the way. And that is all we need for the road ahead. Amen.